

6/23/78 R PB6  
María Isabel Delfino de Cultelli

SEEN BY  
ASST. SEC. DERIAN

June 23, 1978

AR123

BUM 745

Ms. Patricia Derian  
Assistant Secretary of State for  
Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs  
Department of State  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20520

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

( ) Release (X) Exise ( ) Deny

Exemption(s): B6

Declassify: ( ) In Part ( ) In Full

( ) Classify as ( ) Extend as ( ) Downgrade to

Date Declassify on Reason

Dear Ms. Derian,

I am writing to ask for your help in the case of my husband, Uruguayan journalist and labor law expert ANDRES CULTELLI, a political prisoner in Argentina.

His is practically a test-case, as likd many others he was arrested, tortured, incommunicated, and when finally a massive campaign forced to Argentine authorities to press charges, "judged" without access to legal counsel in a lawless farce where a judge condemned him, a man of 56, to 14 years in prison for possession of Marxist literature and similar "crimes". Due to worldwide pressure, a reviewing court later reduced the sentence to the original 5 years the Prosecutor had asked for.

Since then my husband has been practically immured in Sierra Chica prison, where conditions are extremely hard. According to Argentine law, he should be freed on parole in July or August this year, but there exists a very real danger that he may be immediately re-arrested and either deported to Uruguay or made to "disappear".

Andrés has obtained ~~aylum~~ asylum in Sweden and Austria and is under the legal protection of the UNO High Commissioner for Refugees. Nevertheless I fear for his life. Many international organizations and other U.S. institutions have helped me in my campaign, as well as many personalities, including U.S. senators and congressmen.

In the latter case, I have discovered that when these members of the U.S. Congress turn to the State Department in order to obtain background information on the case, they are informed that my husband is a "Tupamaro terrorist" (as happened with Senator Edward Kennedy in April 1976). It is highly regrettable that the State Department should base its file on my husband on information delivered by Ambassador Siracusa, who in turn received it from the Uruguayan police. In other words, the State Department files and disseminates information originated by the Uruguayan government.

In fact, my husband was arrested in Uruguay in 1970 and accused of illegal political activities connected with the Tupamaro movement. But -- and it is a big "but" -- he was tried, declared innocent and freed after 10 months, after which he went into exile.

Before protesting against the State Department's error in this matter, I waited for the outcome of my husband's trial in Argentina. Once again, the only charge that stood up in court was that

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of using identity papers belonging to another person -- a minor misdeed, and one perfectly justified as Andrés wished to avoid a fate similar to that of senator Zalmar Michelini and other Uruguayan exiles being slaughtered in Buenos Aires by the infamous "Death Squads".

I am sure you will understand my anguish and concern on discovering that many men of good will who could help to save my husband's life are being misled about Andrés' personality and true political stance. Suffice it to say that he was a member of the Executive Committee of the Socialist Party of Uruguay, a social-democrat party, between 1950 and 1966, and that he acted for five years as secretary to the group of Socialist congressmen in our Parliament when Uruguay was still a democratic State. He later directed a newspaper, "El Sol", and managed another publication, "Epoca", besides authoring several books on labor and educational affairs. I am a practicing psychologist and we have four daughters. I think this is a far cry from the image of the outlaw and terrorist -- ridiculous, incidentally, for a man approaching sixty -- which is being distributed by the State Department to responsible democrats asking for serious information on Cultelli.

I sincerely hope, Ms. Derian, that you will understand my predicament and help me to have this far-reaching error corrected.

I am sending a copy of this letter to the Uruguay Desk of the State Department.

Please receive my sincere thanks for anything you may see fit to do in this matter.

Yours very sincerely,

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*Maria Isabel Delfino de Cultelli*  
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